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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MONTERREY 000218

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SUBJECT: NUEVO LEON AND COAHUILA LEADERS SEEK TO "OUTSOURCE" PUBLIC SECURITY

REF: MONTERREY 213

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CLASSIFIED BY: Bruce Williamson, Principal Officeer, Consulate Monterrey, Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b)

1 . (C) Summary. Recent confrontations in Nuevo Leon between military units and local police have left the public with even less confidence in the capabilities of state/municipal law enforcement. On June 9, three key Nuevo Leon business associations publicly called for the military to take over municipal policing functions in the state. On June 10, Coahuila Governor Humberto Moreira told us that, at his request, SEDENA was sending 9 high-ranking military officers to assume command of three key state security posts and police forces in six major cities (including the state capital, Saltillo). Meanwhile, Monterrey's largest companies, following the example of industry leaders in El Salvador, plan to provide the Nuevo Leon state police with resources, training, and expertise to help bust up local kidnapping rings and strengthen the rule of law. Industry leaders had apparently considered an alternative plan, one in which privately-funded and operated units dispensed vigilante justice, but the idea of collaborating with the state to provide comprehensive assistance won out. Both the calls for the militarization of municipal policing and business efforts to upgrade state law enforcement capabilities reflect the frustration that private sector leaders and ordinary citizens feel regarding the ever-growing tentacles of organized crime and the apparent powerlessness of local elected officials to change the situation. End Summary.

¶2. (C) With the Mexican military's campaign to arrest corrupt state/local cops in the Monterrey metro region continuing (see reftel), on the evening of June 8 the municipal police forces struck back. When military forces sought to arrest a female police officer from the working class suburb of San Nicolas, San Nicolas commanders called for reinforcements -- which resulted in an impromptu police protest in one of the city's main thoroughfares. San Nicolas police forced trapped motorists from their cars at gunpoint, thereby blocking a busy intersection. Successive requests from both sides for back-up led to a face-off between 150 military/federal officers, 100 municipal police from three jurisdictions (Escobedo, Guadalupe, and San Nicolas), and 40 state officers -- all of whom were armed and a number with grenades in hand and rifles aimed and ready to fire.

After a nerve-wracking three-hour standoff, federal forces ended up taking away the female police officer, who happened to

be a key operative for, and the girlfriend of, San Nicolas's Gulf cartel plaza boss.

¶3. (SBU) Aghast, on June 9 leaders from Monterrey's three main business associations -- CAINTRA, COPARMEX, and CANACO -- jointly called for the military to take over the local police function in Nuevo Leon. With state elections less than 4 weeks away, Governor Gonzalez Paras (PRI) and state Security of Public Security Facci both rejected this proposal, arguing that protection of the citizenry needed to remain a state/local responsibility. Even the opposition PAN candidate for governor agreed, stating that 'militarization never will be the right answer.' Nevertheless, Public Security Secretary Facci reported that during questioning the detained female police officer had admitted that 315 of San Nicolas's 500 officers were on the Gulf cartel's payroll. To help prevent repetitions of the June 8 stand-off, however, Facci ordered that all the state's municipal police forces would be stripped of their long arms and henceforth would have to rely upon only pistols. Facci also prohibited municipal police throughout the state from carrying cell phones as such devices represent a channel through which organized crime capos can transmit their orders to 'narco' cops in the field.

¶4. (C) For its part, after a brief lull the military plans to continue with its wave of detentions, which now totals 96, 78 of which have already been arraigned. The campaign will hit all cities within the Monterrey metro area, with those officers who end up being convicted going to either federal or, more likely, state prison.

¶5. (C) On June 10, CG and DPO received a visit from Coahuila Governor Humberto Moreira (PRI). The Governor repeated past statements he has made to us to the effect that on security issues he trusted no one except the USG and the Mexican military, pointedly excluding his recently-appointed state attorney general/security czar from that list. Moreira said that to improve security in Coahuila state, he had requested SEDENA military command in Mexico City to send him military personnel. Within a few days, he continued, he would have in

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place 5 generals and 2 colonels, three of whom would serve as the state's police chief, investigations unit chief, and prison director and four of whom would command the police forces of four major cities: i.e., Saltillo (the capital), Paras, Ciudad Acuna, and Piedras Negras.

¶6. (C) The general being sent to Piedras Negras would replace a colonel who had been recently assassinated. This time the general would be accompanied by a contingent of 25 soldiers; the other detailees would bring with them a military staff of 10, along with an armored car provided for by the state government. The state envisions the arrival of two generals to take command of the municipal police forces in Torreon and Sabinas as well, although given the conflictive situations in both of these cities, especially Torreon, these deployments would need to wait several months. Moreira stated that the state would pay for the construction of a 250-soldier cuartel in both Torreon and Monclova, with key U.S. firms in Monclova helping to pick up the tab there. The current prison in Monclova would be converted to a maximum-security prison; its existing inmates had already been redistributed to other institutions around the state. Finally, he said, the state and Mexican navy were constructed a base along one of the state's border lakes with Texas to prevent the smuggling of both narcotics (northbound) and weapons (southbound).

¶7. (C) Back in Nuevo Leon, impatient with the progress the state's law enforcement authorities have made in rolling up local kidnapping rings, Monterrey's business elite has decided to lend a helping hand. On May 26 and June 11, representatives from the Group of Ten (the traditional local heavyweights) briefed CG and A/Legatt on a private sector initiative to supplement the state's crime-fighting capabilities via an integrated support plan. Based on a previous effort undertaken

in El Salvador by industry leaders there, the plan contemplates that business would: a) work with the state police anti-kidnap unit to provide training, funding, and equipment, b) push the state legislature to modernize anti-kidnapping laws and other criminal statutes, c) improve the state's judicial and penitentiary systems, and d) inhibit corruption and promote increased civilian participation and greater civic values. Industry leaders had apparently considered an alternative plan, one in which privately-funded and operated units dispensed vigilante justice, but the idea of collaborating with the state to provide comprehensive assistance won out.

¶18. (C) Jose Antonio Fernandez (CEO of the Monterrey-based FEMSA Corp.) told us that this industry-led and funded effort sought to draw upon the local tradition of big business pitching in when the state government encountered difficulties. The centerpiece of their plan was working with the authorities to upgrade the state's response to the surge in kidnappings. The most important step -- and the most difficult one -- would be to ensure that honest, competent officers were assigned to the state anti-kidnap unit. Fernandez's right-hand man, security consultant Mauricio Ramos, observed that the new recruits would need to be well-vetted and well-compensated; currently, some officers assigned to that unit earned a mere 6500 pesos (US\$500) per month. Our interlocutors noted that while official state figures showed a total of 19 kidnappings for 2008 (all of which had been solved), in reality data compiled by private security consultants indicated the commission of more than 250 such crimes last year. Because of the fear of retribution few families report kidnappings, they said, since the police themselves may have actually committed the crime.

¶19. (C) Other elements of the plan would include training for prosecutors and judges, the institution of a 'faceless judges' system in cases involving organized crime, the establishment of a pool of psychologists/consultants to help the families of kidnap victims, reforms to the state's revolving door penitentiary system, human rights and Culture of Lawfulness training, and encouragement for ordinary citizens to report crimes and otherwise involve themselves in the debate on public security issues. Fernandez noted that Governor Gonzalez Paras had embraced the concept and that both the PAN and the PRI gubernatorial candidates had pledged to support it should they prevail in the upcoming July 5 election. To avoid politicizing the issue, the consensus was that Fernandez and other business leaders would not go public with this initiative until after the election.

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¶10. (C) Comment. Civil society is desperately seeking ways to stop organized crime from hijacking control of its local security institutions. Both the calls for the militarization of municipal policing and business efforts to upgrade state law enforcement capabilities reflect the frustration that private sector leaders and ordinary citizens feel regarding the ever-growing tentacles of organized crime and the apparent powerlessness of local elected officials to change the situation. Post will continue to promote Culture of Lawfulness, institution-building/rule of law, and human rights training programs under the Merida Initiative among our local contacts. In addition, post's A/Legatt will explore the possibility of providing technical training and assistance to vetted state anti-kidnap units in the region.

WILLIAMSON